

UMCWFB

CONNECT. GROW. SERVE.

SEPTEMBER 2026



FAITH IN ACTION

Connect with God and others. Grow in faith, understanding and love.
Serve our neighbors on Milwaukee's North Shore and beyond.

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A Reflection From The Pastor

Church Family,

There is something about September. The calendar fills up. School begins, sports return, Wednesday nights come alive, choirs rehearse, and Sunday mornings begin to feel a little fuller. Before we know it, we have fallen right back into our routines. But before we fall into fall, I wonder if there is something more important for us to do: Prepare our hearts.

On September 13, we will gather for our Fall Welcome Picnic. I hope we will see it as more than another event on the church calendar. It is an opportunity to welcome someone who may be looking for something they haven't yet found.

So, before fall begins, I invite you to pray for someone. Think about a neighbor, friend, coworker, family member, or acquaintance who may not have a faith home. Perhaps they need healing. Perhaps they need community, encouragement, purpose, or simply someone to notice them. Perhaps they need the love of Christ. And perhaps God has placed you in their life for a reason.

Make the Invitation

We can advertise worship and post events on social media, but there is still something powerful about one person saying to another, "I'd love for you to come with me." The Fall Welcome Picnic is a natural opportunity to do just that. Invite someone to share a meal, meet some people, and experience a little of what makes this community special. And don't stop with September 13th. Throughout the fall, look for opportunities to invite someone to worship, Wednesday Faith, Food & Friendship, a concert, a class, or a mission opportunity. Sometimes the first step toward faith is simply finding a place where you feel welcome.

Build the Relationships

I also want to encourage us to look around our own congregation. Use the Church Directory App. Find someone you recognize but don't really know. Learn their name. Ask about their story. Sit with someone different on Sunday. Invite someone for coffee. We talk about Building Beloved Community, but beloved community isn't built by programs alone. It is built through relationships.

We have made wonderful investments in our church's future—our vision of Connecting, Growing, and Serving; our staff and Spiritual Journey Pathway; our facilities; and our ministries with children and families. These investments are important, but they are not the destination. The mission is people.

The writer of Hebrews says:

“Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds... not neglecting to meet together.”

— Hebrews 10:24–25

Before the leaves fall, consider someone. Who might God be placing on your heart? Who needs a friend? Who needs community? Who needs an invitation? Pray for them. Reach out to them. Invite them. Welcome them. This fall, let's not simply return to church. Let's reach beyond ourselves. And let's see what God might do when we open our hearts—and our church—to the people God is already placing in our path.

Grace and Peace,
Senior Pastor Gary Holmes



All Church Fall Welcome Picnic

Sunday Sept 13th 11:30am-1:00pm

Coming up in September! Make sure to join us for our annual Fall Welcome Picnic on Sunday, Sept. 13th at 11:30am on the church lawn!

We still need lots of volunteers for this event! Many hands make light work! Sign up to volunteer for the picnic here:

Fall Picnic Volunteer Sign Up



Online Church Directory

Our new online directory is a secure and convenient way to stay connected with others in our church community. The directory is available through the MinistryOne app on your smartphone. The more people who choose to participate, the more helpful the directory becomes for everyone.

Ready to join? You'll find step-by-step instructions on our website: [Online Church Directory](#).

Would you rather have a little help? We're happy to make the process easier. Simply email Shelbysupport@umcwf.org and let us know you'd like to be included in the directory. We can help get you added and will send you an email link to create the login you'll use with the MinistryOne app.



Making A Joyful Noise

NEIL BUBKE

Written by Mae Mobley

Neil grew up in Iowa and always had a love for music, especially piano. His single mother wasn't able to afford lessons, but at age 11, Neil taught himself a piano piece before a large church event. "Just as I started playing the piano, an usher turned on an oscillating fan and my music blew right off the rack," recalled Neil. "Since I had memorized the piece, I just kept going and everything went off without a hitch. A woman from the church saw what happened, noted that I had a musical calling, and arranged for the church to support my musical endeavors." For the next six years, the church paid for Neil's piano lessons, which completely altered the course of his life.

He graduated with a degree in music and then went to law school, both at the University of Iowa. As an excellent student, Neil graduated 3rd in his class out of 250 students and was hired as a law clerk. Quickly, Neil was starting to burn out of the law profession and went back to school for his Masters in Choral Conducting, with the intent of being a full-time church musician.

In 2004, Neil officially gave up the law lifestyle and began working with church choirs. In 2006, he moved to Whitefish Bay to become the Director of Music and Fine Arts at the United Methodist Church. "Not a week goes by I don't thank God for guiding me toward church music," Neil says with a big smile. "Nearly everything in the legal profession is adversarial. The people you're working with are stressed. Every minute that ticks by equates to dollars. Music is the exact opposite. When volunteers come together to sing or play their instruments, it's often the highlight of their day, if not their entire week. There is no 'us vs them' mentality. We're all creating beauty together and we're all winners."



When Neil told family members his plan to migrate from the law into church music, they offered mixed feedback. "My mom was a factory worker and lived paycheck to paycheck. At the time she couldn't understand how I could possibly walk away from a legal career. But Grandma Bubke was incredibly supportive. She knew that God had a plan for me and that music would be my way to make a difference in the world."

His partner of 11 years, Scott Obernberger, has a very similar background of lawyer turned artist. Scott was a criminal defense attorney for 19 years when he suffered a mild stroke at the courthouse. After being discharged from the hospital, he quit practicing law the very next day. Scott always loved pottery and with his extra time began to hone a new craft. He now owns Twice Baked Pottery located in Jefferson, Wisconsin. When asked about the long-distance relationship, Neil says "We hate the driving, but we make it work. Heck, maybe it's the distance that makes it work?" Neil says with a grin.

This June, Neil started his 21st year on staff at UMCWFB. When asked about highlights, Neil recalled the years when he and church volunteers drove to a prison in Racine and sang with the inmates. "The UMCWFB Prison Choir was exceptional on many levels. The thing that stands out most was the way our church members and the inmates became equals as soon as the singing started. "Neil noticed something similar when he directed a children's musical with students from Keefe Avenue Elementary School (an MPS elementary school) and the students from church. "The singing, the dancing, and the courageous story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were all in focus. All the children's gifts were in the spotlight, and pride permeated the auditorium."

When asked how his ministry has evolved over the years, Neil opined on the difference between being a choir director and being a music minister. "When I was fresh out of college, my primary focus was on making sure that our anthems and praise songs sounded good. As time went by, my focus broadened. Of course quality music is important for worship, but building deep and meaningful relationships is even more important for helping people connect with God."



There are many ways to get involved in our fine arts ministries. If music fills your soul, reach out to Neil about getting involved in the Chancel Choir, Praise Team, Handbell Choir, Youth Praise Team, or Children's Choir. or playing your instrument.



Click on the link below and take our Musical Gifts Survey.

MUSICAL GIFTS SURVEY



Grey Guys

Many hands, much progress



Many thanks to the Gray Guys for their time and energy! Special thanks to the basement bulletin board crew, who once again stayed overtime to finish their project. The Walnut Room was returned to usable condition, furniture was moved back from the Fellowship Hall stage, and the Library is now available as a meeting space and headquarters for the School for Seniors. Chapel chairs and the altar table were also relocated, with video technology in both rooms still to be reinstalled.

Work continued in the lower-level home of the newly renamed Light the Way Christian Childcare Center, where the Gray Guys installed bulletin boards, mirrors, and cubbies. Progress also continued in the paint room with the disposal phase, and organization of the space is next. Thank you again, Gray Guys we'll see you in September!

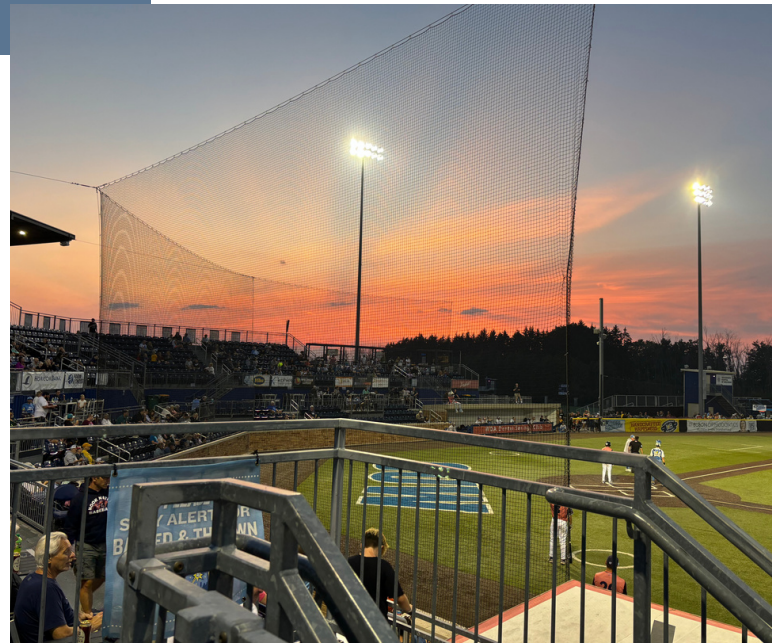
Family Night At The Ballpark

UMCWFB at The Chinooks!

We had a fun night at the ballpark with a great showing from our church family. It was wonderful to see everyone enjoying an evening together.

The Chinooks may not have gotten the win, but our group certainly made the most of the night! We enjoyed good food, great company, and plenty of laughs. And we even had a 50/50 raffle winner from our group!

Thank you to everyone who came out and made the evening such a success. We love gathering outside our usual church events and enjoying being together as a church family.



Church & Society Green Team Report

Through the efforts of our team, UMCWFB is now a member of the Northshore Interfaith Green Team. This relatively new group represents 10 churches and synagogues throughout the Northshore and provides us with great partners to help protect our environment.

We've already held a successful electronics recycling event and hosted a national speaker on Protecting the Great Lakes. In October, we will be having a Musical Instrument Recycling Drive (see flyer in the Weekly Connections) and hope to host an event on Environmental Advocacy and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program—more info coming soon!



UMCWFB Missions Team

On August 25th, a group of from our church gathered at the Hunger Task Force headquarters to fill 440 stock boxes of free food for our area low income senior citizens. The items, put into stock boxes along a conveyor, included cereal, potatoes, vegetables, meat, tuna, spaghetti, fruit, juice and milk.

Everyone of us had an important responsibility including: making up the boxes, putting each item into the boxes, supplying the people on the line by opening up boxes of individual items, sealing and skidding the 40 boxes on a skid and running the cardboard bailing machine. Breaking down the individual item boxes was definitely the hardest thing to do! We were kept busy for over an hour but we all had a good time knowing we were helping our less fortunate neighbors. This event fulfilled the red color band on the Mosaic Covenant which called for us to support a local agency. Thanks to Hunger Task Force and all our great volunteers.



A Thank You From Temba

The July mission focus was to raise money to rebuild the egg house at the Mujila Falls Agricultural Center in Zambia. The designated giving in July raised \$4,650. This should be enough to build a new egg house and hopefully purchase some computers for the college.

When we told Temba Nkomozepi, the Director, he responded, "Wow, thank you so much. We really needed that building. I will work on it as soon as we get the funds. I am very grateful to you, your missions' team and all of the members at Whitefish Bay UMC."

Additionally, with other recent donations designated for our mission partners, we were able to send checks to UMCOR, Habitat, and Rooted and Rising. Thank you for donations large or small, they have a positive impact.



Outdoor Community Yoga Outreach

We were so blessed to have beautiful weather and strong attendance for our community outreach Yoga in the Park at Klode overlooking the lake every Tuesday morning overlooking Lake Michigan! Thank you so much to Kristal and Lisa for co-leading and to all of our weekly yogis who attended!

Our Fall Barre and Yoga classes start on September 8th and are held in Fellowship Hall. Please see Weekly Connection for more details.



Worship In The Park



We had a fabulous time worshipping at Estabrook Park Beer Garden in Mid-August. We had a group of nearly 50 people attend. We experienced uplifting music, a meaningful message by Pastor Gary and fellowship with church friends and community members. The weather was perfect, thanks be to God! It was wonderful to get out in the community and share God's message of love, hope and grace with our community!

We look forward to doing future Worship in the Park events next summer!



Sharing Songs, Stories, & Smiles At Azura



What a wonderful afternoon we had at Azura! Our church families gathered with residents, and it was a joy to see connections forming across generations.

Mr. Neil began by leading the children and residents in song, then provided music while everyone worked on a craft. The residents loved the music, which brought a special energy and plenty of smiles to the afternoon.

Together, we made personalized bookmarks. Each resident chose what they wanted, and our children turned those ideas into something special for them to keep. It was wonderful to watch the kids listen carefully and create each bookmark just for its recipient.

We also enjoyed a book together, with Ms. Kirsten bringing Caps for Sale to life and keeping everyone engaged and smiling.

Throughout the afternoon, we talked, laughed, sang, created, and shared stories. It was a beautiful reminder that serving others doesn't always require a grand gesture. Sometimes it's as simple as listening, singing together, or making something especially for someone.

We are grateful to everyone who joined us and made the afternoon so meaningful. What a blessing it was to serve—and to discover how much we received in return!

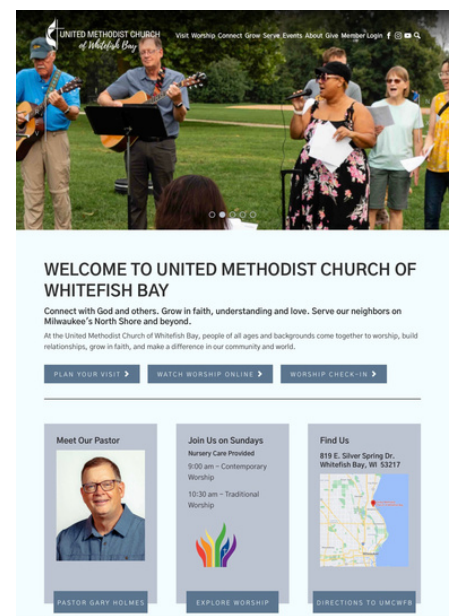


Our Digital Front Door Reimagined

For many people, our website is their first introduction to our church. Before visiting on a Sunday, attending an event, or reaching out with a question, they often spend a few minutes online getting a sense of who we are and what they can expect.

With that in mind, a team has recently refreshed and reorganized the UMCWFB website to make it easier and more welcoming for visitors. The new design highlights the information people are most likely to need as they consider taking that first step through our doors, whether for Sunday worship, the Fall Welcome Picnic, or another church activity.

We invite you to take a look at the refreshed website and explore it for yourself. We hope you'll find that it tells the story of our church community in a warm, clear, and inviting way.



North Shore School for Seniors

Classes start September 14th



Back-to-school also is for the young at heart! Registration is ongoing for the North Shore School for Seniors (NSSS) fall session, with classes starting September 14th. Classes meet at United Methodist Church of Whitefish Bay during the day on Monday or Tuesday at our church.

"Registration is going strong, with 'Mahjong,' a returning favorite, already closed," says Roger Stafford, a member of our church as well as NSSS registrar and board member.

The Fall Session Term 1 begins Sept. 14th and runs through October 6th. Term 2 runs October 19th through November 10th. Class fees are \$10 per class meeting.

Email questions to nssbxt@gmail.com or phone (414) 292-0960.

(Returning your phone message will be congregation member and NSSS volunteer Nancy Lizdas.)



Full class information and registration is available at nss4s.org.

Class catalogs are also available for pick-up at church.

All are welcome – there is no age requirement!

NSSS is an adult interfaith outreach program of UMCWFB.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAY WISHES

1st - Gary Holmes

3rd - Diana DelRosso, Nancy Maier

4th - Bob Kriefall, T. J. Patrick,
George Bennett, Connie Shumba

5th - Clarice Chou

6th - Alyson Berning, Jeremy Schaetzke

8th - William Barrett

9th - Jeff McClellan, Cheryl Sapinski,
Za'Niyah Moore-Hicks

10th - Nolan Dadaian

11th - Claudia Deede

12th - John Hoylman

14th - Harriet Tharp

17th - Paula Braam

18th - Daniel Yunk, Lyle Potter

19th - Madeline Bunke

20th - Jim Lathrop, Kate Halliburton

21st - Holly Morse

22nd - Larry Plaster

23rd - Elayne Waeltz, Addy Fisher

24th - Dennis Daniels

25th - Patty VandenPlas, Madeline Ebert

26th - Gayle Harris, Christine Annin,

Jessa Alderman, Renee Ferrara

27th - Lora Haines (Averbeck)

29th - Ross Workman, Denise Potter

30th - Becca Pipkorn,
Karen Andeen



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
of Whitefish Bay

*Becoming a Beloved Community by
Connecting, Growing, and Serving*

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